

## 1-15-10 Let's Get Back to Work

Now that we've had numerous local clinics and the H1N1 vaccine supply is (finally) plentiful and arriving weekly to medical facilities, the local boards of health can slow down on that issue and get back to work on all the other areas needing attention. Many of those issues have been placed on the back burner and it's time to pull them forward and see how they are doing. Has anything bubbled over? I did get a call about a septic system. Has anything burned? Not that I am aware of, other than a few hurt egos, perhaps. Has anything been ignored? No, not entirely. The awareness is there but it is time to say, "Hello, remember me? I'm back!"

There are some family issues going on. There are households facing the prospect of having their water supply shut off. While a property owner can't do that to the tenant, a homeowner can face that prospect as a result of non-payment. The housing code does include owner occupied homes but water is still available to that homeowner, who did not pay the bill, in bottles, in gallons and even in tanks. All these sources allow for temporary use of safe, potable water, just as though they were camping. It won't be fun or easy but it is possible. The payment of bills and services is a reality faced by all adults.

There are a couple other unresolved housing situations. One has been to court several times and we are not done. Rental property owners (aka landlords) must follow the Mass Housing Code. They can't evict without due process, or shut off the electricity and water just because they want the tenant to leave. Another housing case involved the tenant not maintaining the property and allowing cats and dogs to defecate in the house. I don't know if that case will go to court but, if it does, the pictures and the inspection reports will let the truth be known.

It's time to begin re-visiting restaurants. Sadly, some have closed. I will miss the meal preparation establishment because, not only was it clean and professional, it helped people. It helped people in urgent and potentially dire circumstances, such as the Plympton family dealing with breast cancer. *Make and Take* helped the helpers to provide meals to that family. The family is fine now and we thank you and will miss you. Success to you in your future endeavors!

Other restaurants: Here I come! Your food contact surfaces are sanitized. Your food is cooked, cooled and held at the right temperatures. You are using gloves and other barriers appropriately, right? You'd better be!

I received a call the other day about a certain food establishment just over the town border. The man who called asked me if I knew that no one used gloves at the so-and-so lunch place. "So, I've heard." I enjoyed saying. He went on to describe his ignored request for the use of gloves. The food handler silently continued to handle money and to prepare food. The man refused to pay for or to eat his ordered food. I have to admit that I enjoyed telling this man that

any time he witnessed “ready to eat foods” being handled with bare hands, to please let me know and further describing the other methods of providing barriers, such as tongs or deli papers. I also enjoyed telling him the fairly recent history of importance of “no bare hand contact with ready to eat foods” by reminding him of the hepatitis A outbreaks where the food was simply the vehicle carrying the virus being shed from the food handling person with bare hands.

Then, there was the sweet moment of silence when I knew the caller was expecting me to follow up with my planned response for this establishment. Instead, I asked, “You do know that the so-and-so place is not in Halifax, don’t you?” He did not. I concluded the call with requesting that he please continue with his due diligence by letting me know any time the food code was not being followed in Halifax, but, as for other towns, he would have to call their board of health.

Well, there’s always something but any time we can prevent the something, well, even better! So, let’s get to work at preventing and at responding.

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